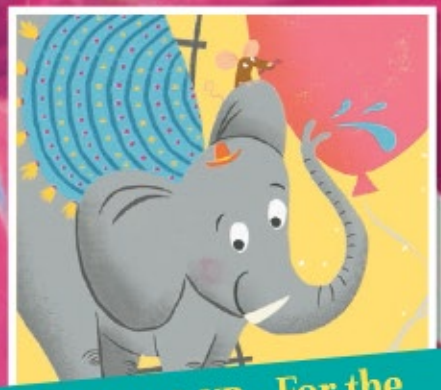
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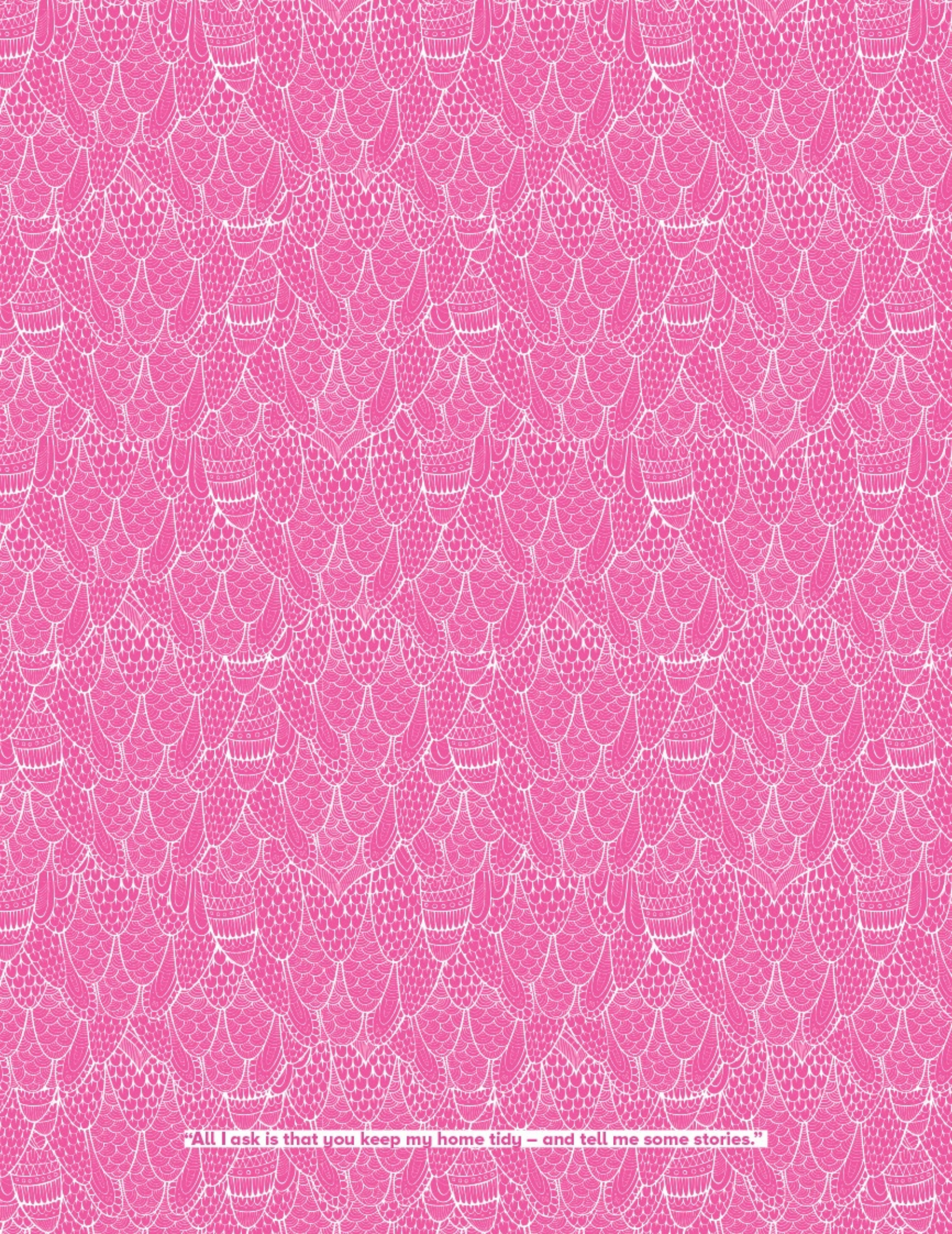
SAIL THE SEAS WITH SINBAD
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Thumbelina

The Phoenix and the Carpet, The Wise Bear, The Wish Fish, Cupid and Psyche & Puzzles!


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Storytime™ magazine is published every month by **Luma Works**, 99 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0JF.

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Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd.
Printed by Southern Print.

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MIX Paper from responsible sources FSC® C010219

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The Wise Bear

One pleasant afternoon, two friends were walking though the forest on their way to spend a weekend camping together.

The friends had known each other since they were little children, and had grown up together, but they hadn't seen each other for a long time. They were both looking forward to their break and a chance to catch up with each other's news. But just when they reached the thickest part of the forest, a huge brown bear strolled onto the path before them.

One of the friends, who spotted the bear first, panicked and ran into the forest. Without a second to think, he found the nearest large tree, and he scrambled up it as quickly as he could, hiding himself among the branches.

The other friend, who was left all alone, was certain he would be attacked and killed by the bear. Not sure what to do, he dropped to the ground and, though he was shaking with fear, he tried to stay as still as a statue.

From the top of his tree, the first friend saw what had happened and thought his friend must have fainted with fright.



The brown bear waddled up to the fallen friend and sniffed around him, then he nudged his body with his giant paw and pushed at him with his big, wet snout. The friend was terrified, but he managed to stay still. When the bear's snout came near his face, he held his breath for as long as he could so that the bear would think he was dead. All this time, the friend up the tree stayed quiet.

At last, the bear gave up. He straightened up and started to waddle away. The friend on the ground let out a sigh of relief but, suddenly, the bear turned round and came back! He leant down to the frightened friend and seemed to whisper something in his ear. Then the bear stood up and lumbered away, into the trees.

The friend who had scurried up the tree trunk waited until he was sure that it was safe to come down and, when he saw his old friend shakily climb to his feet, he clambered down the tree and joined the forest path again.

"Phew!" he laughed. "That was close. I thought you were in trouble for a second!"



“Yes,” said his friend, still a little shaken.

“You know, it’s weird. It looked like the bear leant down to whisper something to you.”

“He did!” said his friend, looking thoughtful.

“Really? The bear spoke! What did he say?”

“He said... never go camping with a friend who abandons you at the first sign of danger.”

And, with that, the friend who the bear had spoken to picked up his rucksack, turned around and headed for home again.

Story Tip

When you were reading the story, what did you imagine the wise bear whispered to the friend on the ground? What would you say to the bear if he whispered to you?



The Wish Fish

There was once a fisherman and his wife and they lived in a shabby little shack by the sea.

One day, the fisherman was out at sea when he caught an extraordinary flounder. Its scales looked like pure gold and, when the fisherman hauled it onto the boat, it pleaded, "Sir, I beg you to let me live. Put me back in the water and I'll show you just how special I am."

"You already have!" cried the fisherman. "I've never met a talking fish before!" And he quickly released the golden flounder into the sea. It disappeared under the waves for a second, then bobbed up to the top again and said, "To show you my thanks, I will grant you a wish. What would you like?"

Imagine It!

What would you ask the Wish Fish for?



"Well," said the fisherman, "I am a happy soul, but I know that my wife would like a nice cottage with a pretty little garden, please."

"Go home," said the flounder. "Your wish is granted."

The fisherman dashed home, where he found a sweet little cottage with a living room, a bedroom and a kitchen. Outside, there was a pretty garden with flowers and a vegetable patch, just as he had hoped. He explained to his wife what had happened.

"Now we can live well," he smiled, but his wife just nodded and said, "Hmm... Let's see."

After a week, she began to complain. "Husband, this cottage is too small. I can't help thinking that you made a mistake. You should have asked for something bigger. Can you ask the fish for a manor house instead?"

"But he only just gave us this cottage!" said the fisherman.

"Just ask!" insisted the wife. "I'm sure he won't mind."

The fisherman liked their new cottage, but he sailed out to sea and called:

"Golden flounder in the sea,
Can you grant a wish for me?"

After a while, the flounder popped its head above the waves. "What do you want, fisherman?" it asked.

"I love our cottage, but my wife has asked for a large manor house."





"Go home," said the flounder. "Your wish is granted."

The fisherman sailed for home again and there, before him, stood a grand manor house. A servant opened the door, revealing a huge hallway, a carved wooden staircase and many large rooms. His wife was telling her other servants what to do.

"Now we can be happy!" smiled the fisherman. But his wife just shrugged and said, "Maybe."

All was well for a few weeks, but one morning, the wife said, "What fools we have been, husband! We should have asked for a castle. You must sail to the fish and ask for a castle instead!"

"But we have everything we need here," said the fisherman.

"I don't," said the wife. "I want more!"

And so, with a heavy heart, the fisherman put out to sea and called:

"Golden flounder in the sea,
Can you grant a wish for me?"

The flounder soon appeared and said, "What is it now, fisherman?"

"It's my wife," sighed the fisherman. "She thinks we should have a castle."

"Go home," said the flounder. "Your wish is granted."

The fisherman returned home to find his wife standing outside a magnificent stone castle.

Inside, there was a huge staircase and a banqueting hall with golden chairs and tables, and many more rooms. In the grounds, there were stables and gardens, and a wonderful fountain.

"What a beautiful castle," gasped the fisherman. "Now we can be satisfied." But his wife just said, "Perhaps."

Early the next morning, she shook the fisherman awake. "I've been thinking. What is the point of owning a castle if I'm not a queen? You must ask the flounder to grant this wish for me or we'll never be happy!"

"But I am happy!" said the fisherman.

"I'm not," answered his wife. "Get up – you must go straight away."

The fisherman got dressed and off he sailed to see the flounder.

"Golden flounder in the sea,
Can you grant a wish for me?"

The fish sighed to see the fisherman there again. "Well?" it said.

"My wife thinks that she should be a queen now," mumbled the fisherman.

"Go home," said the flounder. "Your wish is granted."

When the fisherman arrived home, he was greeted by a trumpet fanfare and a royal courtier placed a crown on his head. "Her Royal Highness is in the throne room, sire," said the courtier.

The fisherman felt silly in his fishing gear and crown. When he found his wife, she was perched on a throne, which was decorated with diamonds.



"You are queen," said the fisherman. "At last, you can be happy."

"No!" said his wife. "I am not happy. I don't like how the sun shines in my eyes and I don't like how draughts blow under the doors. I've decided I need to rule the world so I can change these things. Can you ask the fish?"

"I can't ask for that! The flounder has already given us so much."

But his wife moaned and moaned, so the fisherman set off over the waves and called out wearily:

"Golden flounder in the sea,
Can you grant a wish for me?"

The flounder took a while to appear. "You again!" groaned the fish.

Feeling embarrassed, the fisherman said, "My wife wants to rule the world."

"What?" said the flounder. "Okay, go home and you will see that she now has everything she deserves."

The fisherman made his way home, and when he got there, he laughed out loud to see his wife sitting on a little wooden stool outside the shack they first lived in.

Happy to have his old life back, he never again called for the flounder – and his wife finally had to learn how to be satisfied with what she had.



Sinbad's First Voyage

Long ago in Baghdad, there lived a hard-working porter called Sinbad. He earned a meagre living lugging things around for people and the money he had in his pocket was never quite enough.

One blistering hot day, he was carrying a particularly heavy load and needed to rest. He sat down outside the home of a wealthy merchant and, as he sat there, he heard music and happy voices drifting through the window. He peeked inside and saw a beautiful garden with a pool, and many servants bringing out a feast.

"How is it," cried Sinbad in despair, "that I slave so hard all the hours of the day, yet I will never see a life of comfort like this?"



His heart ached with the unfairness of it all. He lifted up his heavy load to continue his journey but, as he did so, a servant appeared at the gate.

“Sir, my master wishes to see you.”

The porter was puzzled as he had never met the owner of the house, but he followed the servant through the gates into a garden overflowing with fruit trees, fountains and flowers. Sinbad the porter thought that he must be in paradise.

Seated on a silk cushion, surrounded by his friends and courtiers, was a nobleman dressed in fine clothes.

The porter bowed, but the nobleman told him to stand up and invited him to eat as much as he liked. Sinbad was delighted by his good fortune. He ate until he was full, and thanked his host. The nobleman said, “You are welcome, hard-working stranger,” for he had heard Sinbad’s cries outside the gate. “Now tell me your name, sir.”

“I am Sinbad the porter.”

The host’s face broke into a grin and he said, “Well, we have something in common. I too am Sinbad – Sinbad the sailor – and I was once a poor, hard-working man like you. Take a seat and I will tell you my tale.”



So Sinbad the porter made himself comfortable and Sinbad the sailor began his story.



“My father was a wealthy merchant and I grew up without a worry in the world, but I was a foolish young man and quickly wasted the money he had worked so hard for all his life.

“When there was nothing left, I was forced to sell my family home, my possessions and even my clothes.

“With the money I had left, I hired a ship and a crew and went to seek adventure at sea. We set off for the nearest big port and, over the next few months, we traded whatever we could, increasing our wealth at each place we dropped anchor.

“One day, we came to a beautiful island covered in exotic plants and trees, and with sand so golden that it sparkled in the sunlight. Eager to feel the sand on our bare feet, we ran ashore. Only the captain stayed on board. We spent the afternoon lazing on the beach and, when the sun began to set, we lit campfires. Within moments, we heard the ship’s bell ringing and the captain shouting, ‘Run for your lives!’

“At once, the beach began to shudder violently, throwing us off our feet. We ran as quickly as we could towards the ship, but towering waves started to crash against the shore and the island lifted into the air and tipped to one side, forcing many of my crew to slide into the churning sea below.

“As I fell with them, I grabbed the trunk of a falling palm tree. It was this that saved my life, and I gripped it tightly as the waves tossed me back and forth. Eventually, I managed to climb onto the trunk. When I looked up, I saw that the beautiful island we had moored at was no island at all – it was a beast of a whale, far bigger than any I have ever seen before or since. Our fires must have woken it from its deep slumber.

“The angry whale thrashed its tail and dived down, creating an enormous wave that swept me far from my ship. By now, night had fallen and, with the ship far in the distance, I felt I was sure to meet my doom.





"All I could do was cling to the tree trunk and hope for survival. But luck was on my side and, as dawn broke, I washed up on the sandy shore of an unknown place.

"As soon as I had recovered, I walked along the beach and, in the distance, noted a majestic-looking mare, roped to a tree. As I approached, a great blue horse emerged from the sea – a ghostly sea-stallion – and started to drag the mare into the sea, where she would surely drown. I couldn't stand by and watch, so I grabbed a stick and ran towards the sea-stallion, fighting it off furiously.

"The mare neighed with terror, but at last, the supernatural beast gave up and galloped back into the waves. As I calmed the mare, a groom came running over.

"'I must thank you, kind stranger,' he said. 'You have just saved the life of King Mirjan's favourite horse.'

"The groom invited me to travel with him to the capital city and, when we arrived, he told King Mirjan what had happened. The king insisted on thanking me personally. When I told him the tale of my first voyage, he was convinced that I must be blessed. 'Any other man would have drowned 500 times!' he laughed.

"He offered me a job as master of the island's main port, where each day I registered all the ships that came in and out. Imagine my joy when, one day, my own ship came into port! The captain recognised me at once and hauled out a chest with all the money I had made on our voyage together – it had survived the attack of the monstrous island whale.

"I took the chest to King Mirjan to thank him for his kindness and, in return, he rewarded me with a casket of jewels!

"I said farewell to him, then sailed with my crew to a large city port, where I sold the jewels for ten times the value of my chest. I was rich! By the time I returned to Baghdad, my first voyage had made me wealthy enough to buy this palace and all the comforts we are enjoying today."

Sinbad the sailor ended the tale of his exciting adventures by giving the porter a bag filled with 100 gold coins – and Sinbad the porter delivered his heavy load, wondering if his own life might now begin to have the same good fortune as Sinbad the sailor's.

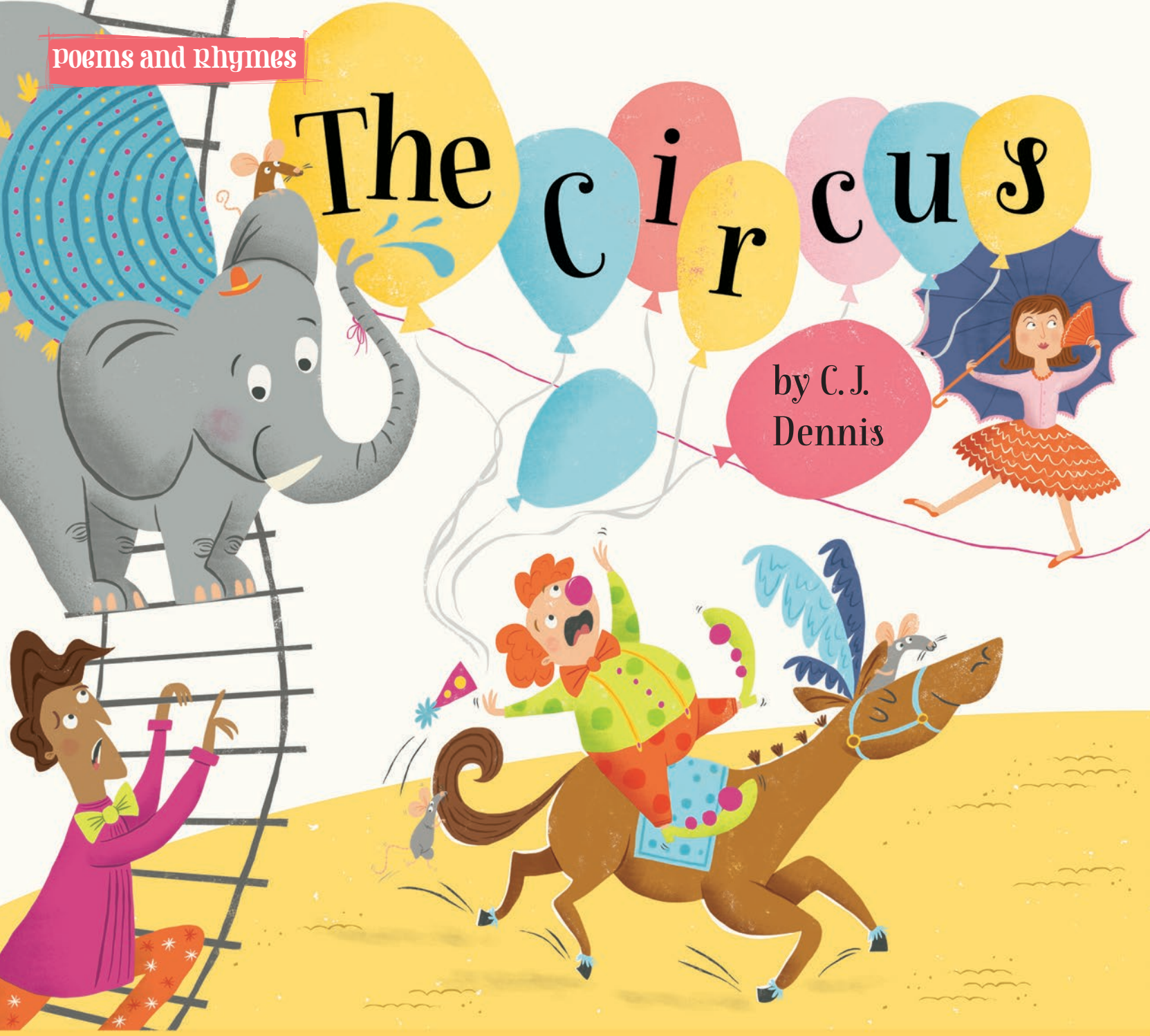
Did You Know?

Sinbad the sailor went on seven incredible voyages, and faced many fantastical beasts, including giant snakes, an ogre, a city of apes and bird-people!



The circus

by C. J. Dennis



Hey, there! Hoop-la! The circus is in town!
Have you seen the elephant? Have you seen the clown?
Have you seen the dappled horse gallop round the ring?
Have you seen the acrobats on the dizzy swing?
Have you seen the tumbling men tumble up and down?
Hoop-la! Hoop-la! The circus is in town!

Answer: There are 7 mice.



Hey, there! Hoop-la! Here's the circus troupe!
Here's the educated dog, jumping through the hoop.
See the lady Blondin with the parasol and fan,
The lad upon the ladder and the India-rubber man.
See the joyful juggler and the boy who loops the loop.
Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Here's the circus troupe!

Count It!

How many mice can you see in this picture? Write your answer in the box.

Thumbelina

By Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time, there was a woman who wanted a child but couldn't have one, so she decided to ask the fairies for help.

The fairy queen gave her a small seed and said, "Plant this in a flower pot and good luck will come your way."

The woman thanked the fairy queen and, in just a few days, a beautiful red tulip grew in the pot.

"What a pretty flower!" said the woman and she bent down to take a closer look. As she did so, the tulip petals opened up to reveal a tiny girl, no bigger than your thumb.

The woman lifted the sweet little child, who was as light as a feather. The woman smiled and said, "I will call you Thumbelina!"



That night, the woman nestled the girl in a bed made from a walnut shell lined with small petals, with a velvety red rose petal for a blanket.

The next morning, to amuse her tiny child, the woman placed a large dish on the table, filled with water and leaves. Thumbelina used the leaves as boats and paddled from side to side. In the afternoon, the woman told Thumbelina stories and taught her how to read and write. Later that day, the little girl sang songs with a voice as sweet as a fairy's.

And so it went for many months. The woman and her teeny child were blissfully happy together.

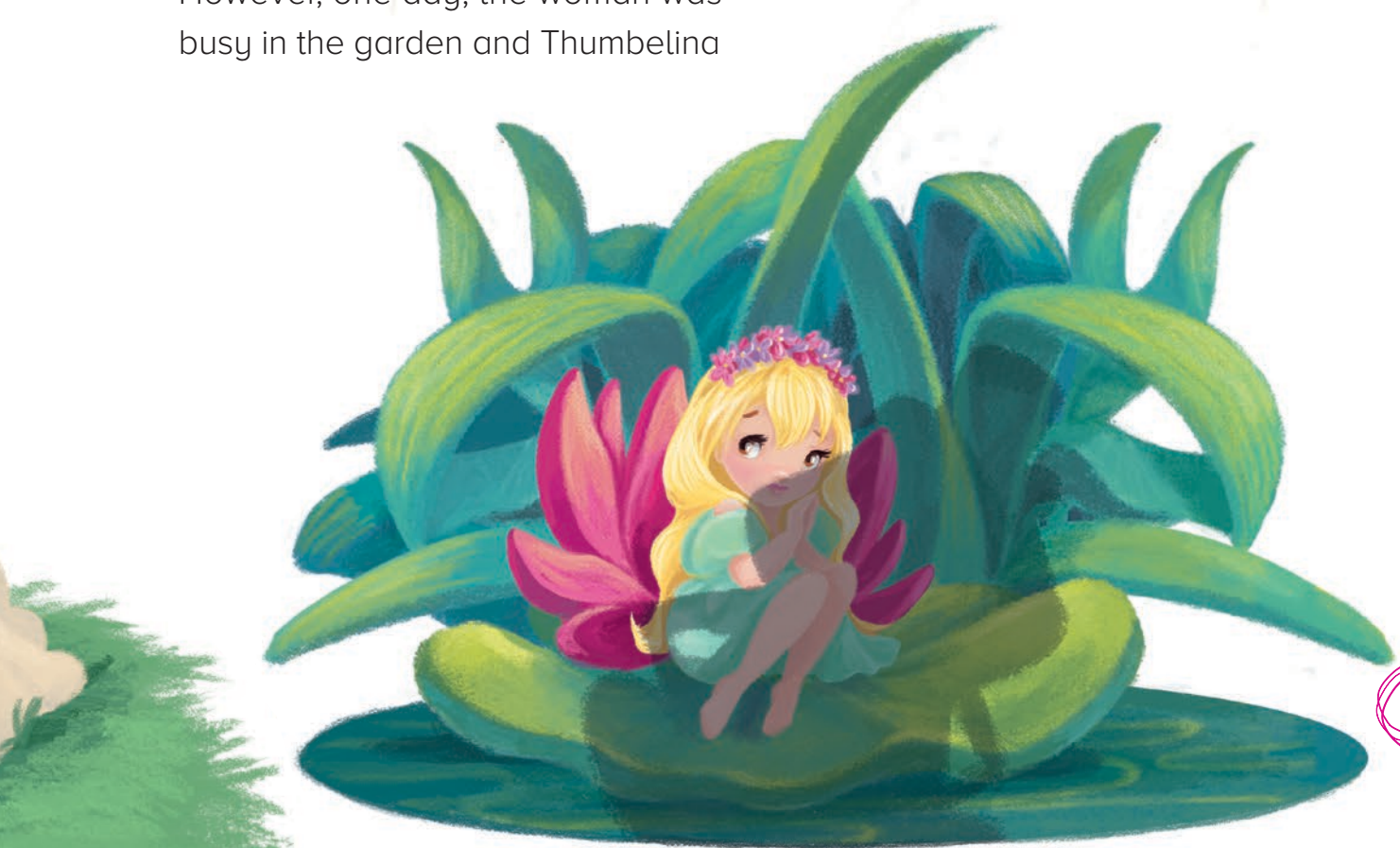
However, one day, the woman was busy in the garden and Thumbelina was drawing a picture, when a large toad crept out from behind a rock.

"That fair maiden would make a fine wife for my son," thought the toad, and she crawled over to Thumbelina and grabbed her. Little Thumbelina cried out, but her mother didn't hear her.

When they reached the stream where the toad lived, she called her son, who saw pretty little Thumbelina and said, "Croak, croak."

Thumbelina cowered to see such an ugly beast.

"Don't frighten your new wife!" said the toad's mother. "I will put her on a lily pad in the middle of the stream, so she can't escape, and we'll prepare for your wedding."



The mother toad carried Thumbelina to the lily pad and left her there. All alone, Thumbelina sat and wept.

Soon, her crying was heard by the fish who lived there. They popped their heads out of the water and Thumbelina told them her plight.

"A dainty girl like you can't marry a big toad!" they said and, together, the fish nibbled at the lily pad's stem until it broke free and floated down the stream, far away from the toads.

"Good luck, Thumbelina!" cried the fish, and she waved to them as the lily pad carried her away.

On and on the stream flowed, passing through villages and towns. The sun danced on the river, making it look like liquid gold. At last, a beautiful butterfly landed on the lily pad next to her.

"What a delicate little thing you are," said the butterfly, and Thumbelina curtseyed to him gracefully. "Tie a ribbon around my back to hold on to and I'll take you for a ride!"

The butterfly took off and Thumbelina clung tightly to its back, admiring the view of flower-filled fields below.

But, suddenly, a large, clumsy beetle flew by and bumped into the butterfly, knocking Thumbelina off.



Thumbelina fell to the ground, landing in the centre of a daisy on the edge of a forest. For the rest of the summer, she made the forest her home. She wove a hammock from blades of grass and hung it under a big leaf for shelter. She drank dew and sipped nectar from flowers. She sang with the birds and made a good life for herself. But when winter came, and the birds flew away and the flowers wilted, she soon grew lonely, hungry and cold. Certain she would starve, Thumbelina left the forest in search of a new home.

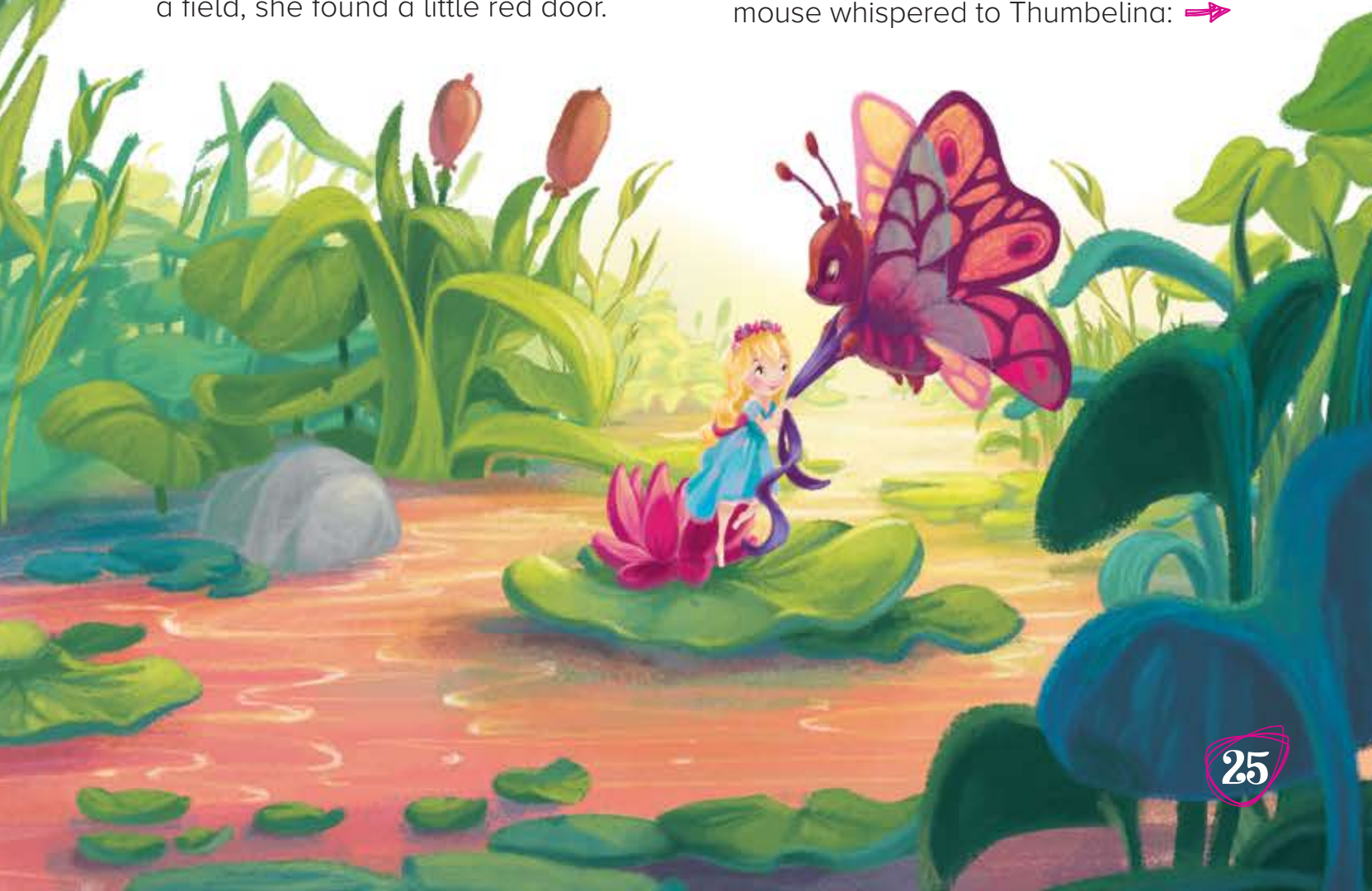
At last, hidden in a hedgerow across a field, she found a little red door. When she tapped at it, it was opened by a friendly field mouse.

"Poor girl!" cried the mouse, when he saw how cold she looked. "Do come in and warm yourself by the fire." He shared his food with her, as she told him her sorry tale.

"You are welcome to stay with me," he said. "All I ask is that you keep my home tidy – and tell me some stories."

Thumbelina was most grateful for the mouse's kindness – and she kept his house sparkling clean.

Soon, they had a visit from a mole in a smart velvet coat. As he entered, the mouse whispered to Thumbelina:



"Be sure to tell him your best stories,

Spot It!

Can you find these three close-up images in the room? Tick each box when you find them.





for he loves to hear a tale or two."



So Thumbelina told the mole about the singing birds and the golden sun on the river. She told him of dainty butterflies and beautiful flowers – but the mole wasn't interested. He thought his underground world was far more entertaining. However, he fell in love with Thumbelina's sweet voice and started to visit more often.

One day, he invited the field mouse and Thumbelina to walk with him in a new tunnel he had built. As they walked along the gloomy passage, they found a dead swallow. It had fallen through a hole in the tunnel and looked like it had died of cold.



The mole pushed it to one side and said, "How miserable to be a bird. All they do is tweet all day until winter kills them."

But Thumbelina's heart ached to see the little bird lying there. The mole and field mouse walked on, and she stayed with the swallow. "Perhaps it was you who sang with me in the forest," she said.

She gathered some hay and draped it over the swallow like a blanket and, as she did so, she heard the very faint beating of its heart.

"You're alive!" smiled Thumbelina. She stayed with the bird all night and, by morning, it had opened its eyes.

"Thank you so much, little maiden – you have saved my life. I will soon be able to fly again," said the swallow.

Over the next few weeks, Thumbelina secretly nursed the swallow back to health. When it was strong enough to fly again, it said, "Will you come with me? I think you will like my home."

"I can't," said Thumbelina sadly, as she didn't want to hurt the feelings of the field mouse, who had been so kind to her. Instead, she watched the swallow fly through the tunnel and out into the spring sunshine.

Later that day, the mouse scurried home, chattering with excitement. "I have wonderful news, Thumbelina! The mole wants to marry you! He is a fine gentlemen with cellars full of food – you are very lucky indeed."

But Thumbelina didn't feel lucky – she didn't want to marry the mole. However, the field mouse didn't hear her pleas – he was too busy making her wedding gown, while she stared out of the window, wishing she had flown off with the swallow when she had the chance.

On her wedding day, Thumbelina decided to go outside one last time. As she stood in the field, she shouted, "Goodbye, blue sky! Farewell, flowers! Say hello to the swallow for me!"

Suddenly, she heard a familiar "Tweet, Tweet," and there was her swallow friend. He swooped down beside her and she told him of her awful fate.

"Come with me, Thumbelina. We can fly far from here to a place where the sun always shines. You saved my life and now I can save yours!"

Thumbelina didn't waste a moment. She climbed onto the swallow's back and off they soared, over forest and sea and mountain and valley. Tiny Thumbelina couldn't believe the wonderful sights she could see.



At last, they reached a crystal blue lake, surrounded by lush green trees. There was a marble palace next to it, and the swallow's nest was in the eaves of the palace roof.

"This is my home," said the swallow, "but this is not comfortable for you."

So he flew down to some beautiful flowers in the gardens below and placed her gently on a petal. When Thumbelina climbed into the middle of the flower, she gasped to see a tiny man there, with a golden crown and two gossamer wings. He was only a little taller than Thumbelina and he was incredibly handsome.

He told Thumbelina that he was the king of the flowers and, when he heard her story, he was so enchanted by her, he asked Thumbelina to marry him.

"Yes!" laughed Thumbelina, and all the flowers around them opened up. From each one came a flower fairy with a gift for Thumbelina. All the gifts were splendid, but her favourite was a pair of fairy wings, so that she too could flutter from flower to flower.

And that is how a tiny girl – no bigger than your thumb – became the fairy queen of flowers.



Write It!

Can you make a list of five things that are the same size as Thumbelina – no bigger than your thumb?

Cupid and Psyche

Long ago in Ancient Rome, there lived a princess called Psyche, who was so beautiful that people would travel from far and wide just to catch a glimpse of her.

The goddess Venus was so enraged when she heard about Psyche that she decided to do something about it. Only the gods were worthy of such adoration!

She called for her son Cupid, who had the power to make mortals fall in love with the touch of an arrow.

"Find Psyche," said Venus, "and use your powers to make her fall in love with someone who isn't a mortal, and make sure that no human ever dares marry her!"

Cupid made himself invisible and set off for Psyche's chambers, where he found her fast asleep.



He touched her with the tip of an enchanted arrow but, as he did so, Psyche opened her eyes. When he saw how beautiful she was, Cupid accidentally dropped his arrow on his foot. In an instant, he fell hopelessly in love with her. Cupid fled, as he knew that if his mother found out, he would get into great trouble.



In the year that followed, Princess Psyche's beauty was still widely admired, but there were no longer any suitors queuing up to ask for her hand in marriage. The king and queen couldn't understand it – they didn't realise that it was the work of Venus.

Troubled, they travelled to their local oracle to discover Psyche's destiny.

"She must marry a creature not of this world," said the oracle. "Her husband awaits her at the top of the mountain."

The king and queen wept to hear the news – they thought she must be destined to marry a monster, but Psyche was brave. "Lead me to the mountain – I'm not afraid," she said.

The next day, the royal family set off for the mountain. At the peak, Psyche said a sad farewell to her parents and was left alone to wait for the monster husband she secretly dreaded.

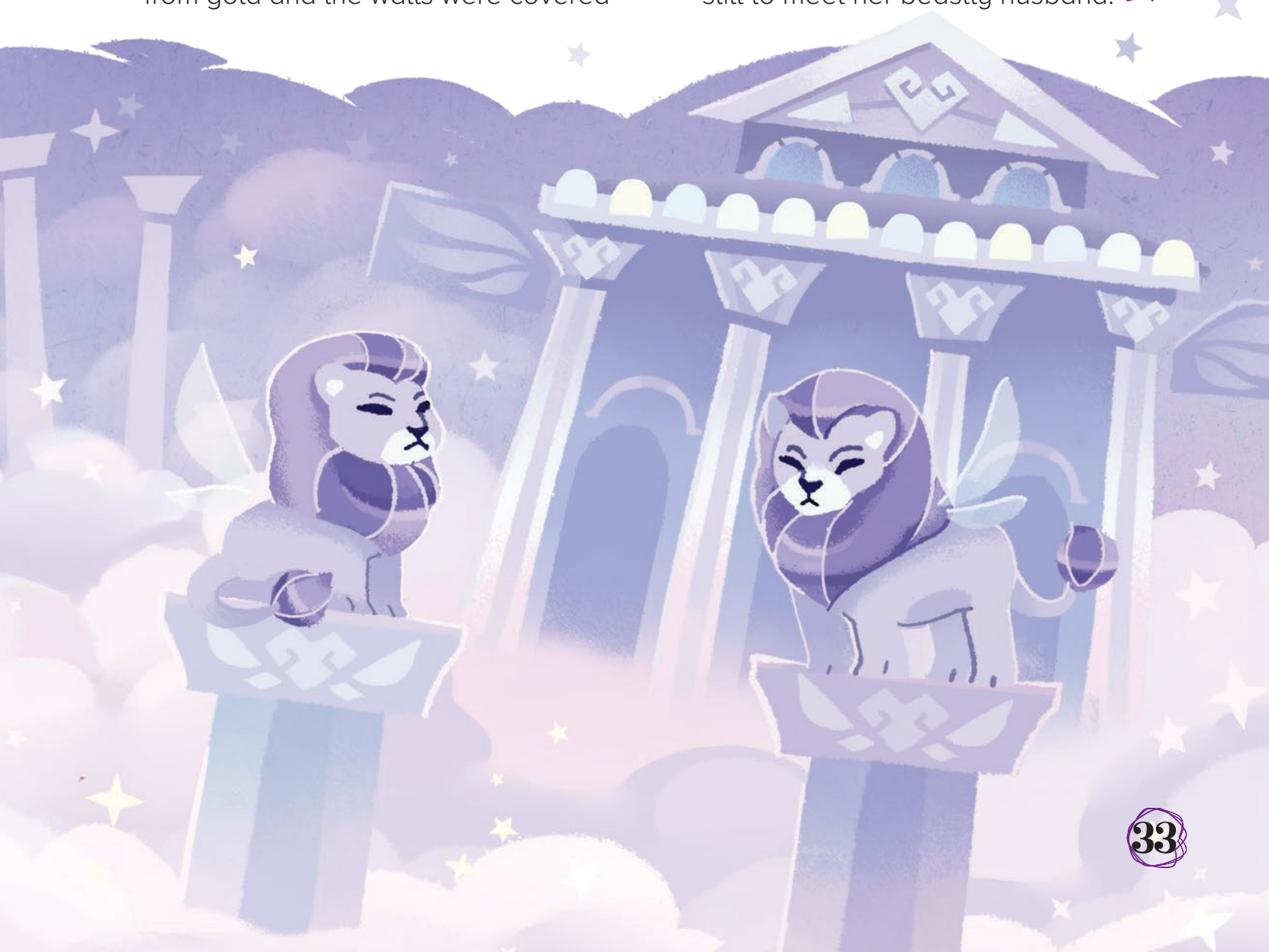
To her great surprise, instead, Zephyr – the god of the west wind – swept her away, carrying her to a grand palace, concealed in the clouds.

Psyche walked into the palace, where the furniture and pillars were made from gold and the walls were covered with fine paintings. Every room was laden with ornaments and treasures. Suddenly, a voice from nowhere said:

“My lady, all that you see here is yours, and we are your servants. Though you cannot see us, we are here to make you happy.”

Psyche sat down at a grand table, where fine delicacies were presented to her by invisible servants.

After dinner, she took a luxurious bath and fell asleep between silken covers – still to meet her beastly husband.





Over the next few days, Psyche asked many times when her husband would be home, and each time a voice answered, “Soon, my lady.”

One night, when she couldn’t sleep, Psyche heard footsteps in her room. Someone sat on her bed and began to stroke her hair, “Oh, how I love you, my beautiful Psyche,” said the voice. Then the stranger lay down beside her and slept. But in the darkness, Psyche couldn’t see him and, by dawn, he had disappeared.

This went on for many weeks, until one night, Psyche said, “Why don’t you ever come to me in daylight?”

A sad voice answered, “Isn’t it enough that I love you, Psyche? What if you should see me and fear me?” And the stranger disappeared in an instant.

The following night, Psyche hid a lamp beneath her bed. The stranger returned, as always, and spoke words of love to Psyche. She waited until he fell asleep, then she lit the lamp and was astonished to see not the hideous monster she had expected, but the god Cupid, with blond hair and wings as white as blossom. He jolted awake.

“Oh, Psyche! Why have you done this? I disobeyed my mother to be with you – I hid from you to protect you from

her! Now I must leave you forever." And Cupid flew out of the window, leaving Psyche in tears.

When Psyche awoke the following morning, the cloud palace had disappeared and she was lying on the top of the mountain.

Heartbroken, she decided to walk the whole land in search of Cupid. She visited the temples of the gods to ask for their help and, at last, she came to the temple of Venus, where she knelt down and begged for forgiveness.

Venus was still jealous of Psyche, but she appeared before her.

"So you think you are good enough to marry my lovesick son, do you? Let's see about that!"

Venus took Psyche to a room filled with many types of grains. "Sort these grain types into separate jars by this evening. Do not fail."

Psyche knew that it was an impossible test and felt great despair, but Cupid, who was watching over her, ordered the ants to help her. By evening, the industrious little ants had completed the task with ease.

When Venus returned, she cried, "Cheat! Someone has helped you!" So she set a second task for Psyche.

"Cross this raging river and bring me some of the precious golden fleeces from the sheep on the other side."

Psyche set off for the river and, when she arrived, Cupid's friend, the river god Almo, appeared. "The river is dangerous now and the sheep are bad-tempered.



Wait until the midday sun has passed. Then the river will be calm and the sheep will be sleeping in the shade."

Psyche followed Almo's advice and she got the golden wool with ease. When she gave it to Venus, again the goddess shouted, "Cheat! Someone is helping you!"

Venus was about to give Psyche a third impossible task, when Jupiter, the king of all the gods, appeared before her – and he was angry.

"Enough of this, Venus! It is time to stop punishing Psyche and let her be with her true love, Cupid!"

Jupiter's powers were so great, Venus had no choice but to give in. Jupiter gave Psyche a cup of ambrosia. "Drink this and you will become a god – then you and Cupid can be together."

Cupid flew down to Psyche's side as she took a sip of ambrosia, then they flew into the heavens, where they still live in harmony today.



The winged god Cupid famously had two types of arrow: golden arrows, to make people fall in love, and lead arrows, to make them find someone unattractive. Today, Cupid is often drawn as a chubby little boy, but long ago, he was shown as a tall, handsome god.

The Phoenix and the Carpet

By E. Nesbit

It was almost the fifth of November, and a doubt arose as to the quality of the fireworks for the Guy Fawkes celebration.

"They were jolly cheap," said Robert, "and suppose they don't go off on the night?"

"The ones I got are all right," Jane said. "I know, because the man at the shop said they were worth thribble the money—"

"I'm sure thribble isn't grammar," Anthea said.

"Of course it isn't," said Cyril.

"Look," said Robert, "I think we ought to test them. Just a few, and if those go, the others will. We needn't go out; we can just let them off on the old tea tray."

So the table was moved back, and Anthea got the tray. Then all the fireworks were put on the table. Robert took a cracker, Cyril and Anthea had Roman candles; but Jane's paw closed on the gem of the collection – the Jack-in-the-box.



The cracker and the Roman candles were all that could be expected for the money; but when it came to the Jack-in-the-box it simply sat in the tray. So Anthea slipped away and came back with a pot of paraffin and threw it over the tray just when Cyril was trying to light it. The Jack-in-the-box didn't catch fire, but the paraffin acted differently, and a hot flash of flame leapt up. The children backed to the wall, and the pillar of fire reached from floor to ceiling.

"My," said Cyril, with emotion, "you've done it this time, Anthea."

The flame was spreading out under the ceiling. Robert and Cyril saw that no time was to be lost. They kicked the edges of the carpet over the tray.

This cut off the fire, and there was soon nothing left but smoke and a dreadful smell.

All hands now rushed to the rescue, when suddenly a sharp crack made the amateur firemen step back. Another crack. The carpet moved as if it had a cat wrapped in it – the Jack-in-the-box had at last lighted, and was going off inside the carpet.

Robert opened the window. Anthea screamed, Jane burst into tears, and Cyril turned the table over on top of the carpet heap. But the firework went on, banging and bursting and spluttering underneath the table.

The next moment Mother rushed in, attracted by the howls of Anthea, and in a few moments there was a dead



WARNING! Fireworks should always be handled by grown-ups, as the children in this story found out. Please don't try this at home!

silence, and the children stood looking at each other's black faces, and at Mother's white one.

The rest of the fireworks were confiscated, but next day all was forgotten and forgiven: only the nursery had to be cleaned, and the ceiling had to be whitewashed.

At teatime a man came with a rolled-up carpet, and Father paid him. Then the carpet was put down. As the last fold was unrolled, something hard bumped out of it and trundled along the nursery floor. All the children scrambled for it, and Cyril got it. It was shaped like an egg, very yellow and shiny, half-transparent, and it had an odd sort of light in it that changed as you held it. It was as though a yolk of pale fire just showed through the stone. It was put on the mantelpiece, where it brightened up the dingy nursery.

On the fifth of November, Father and Mother went to the theatre, and the children were not happy. They were not even allowed to have a bonfire.

"No more playing with fire, thank you," was Father's answer, when asked.

The children sat sadly round the fire in the nursery.

"I'm beastly bored," said Robert.

"Perhaps something will happen," said Anthea, comfortably.

"I have a sort of feeling things would happen if we could only give them a shove," said Cyril.



“I wish they taught magic at school,” Jane sighed. “If we could do a little magic, it might make things happen.”

So they chalked strange figures by the fire and chanted all the songs they could think of. And, of course, nothing happened. So then Anthea said, “I’m sure a magic fire ought to be made of sweet-smelling wood, and have magic essences in it.”

“I’ve got some cedar-wood pencils,” said Robert. So they burned the pencils. And still nothing happened.

“Let’s burn some of the eucalyptus oil we have for our colds,” said Anthea.

And they did. But nothing happened. Then they got some cloths, and waved them over the magic chalk-tracings and sang. And still nothing happened. So they waved more wildly, and Robert’s cloth caught the golden egg and whisked it off the mantelpiece. It rolled under the grate.

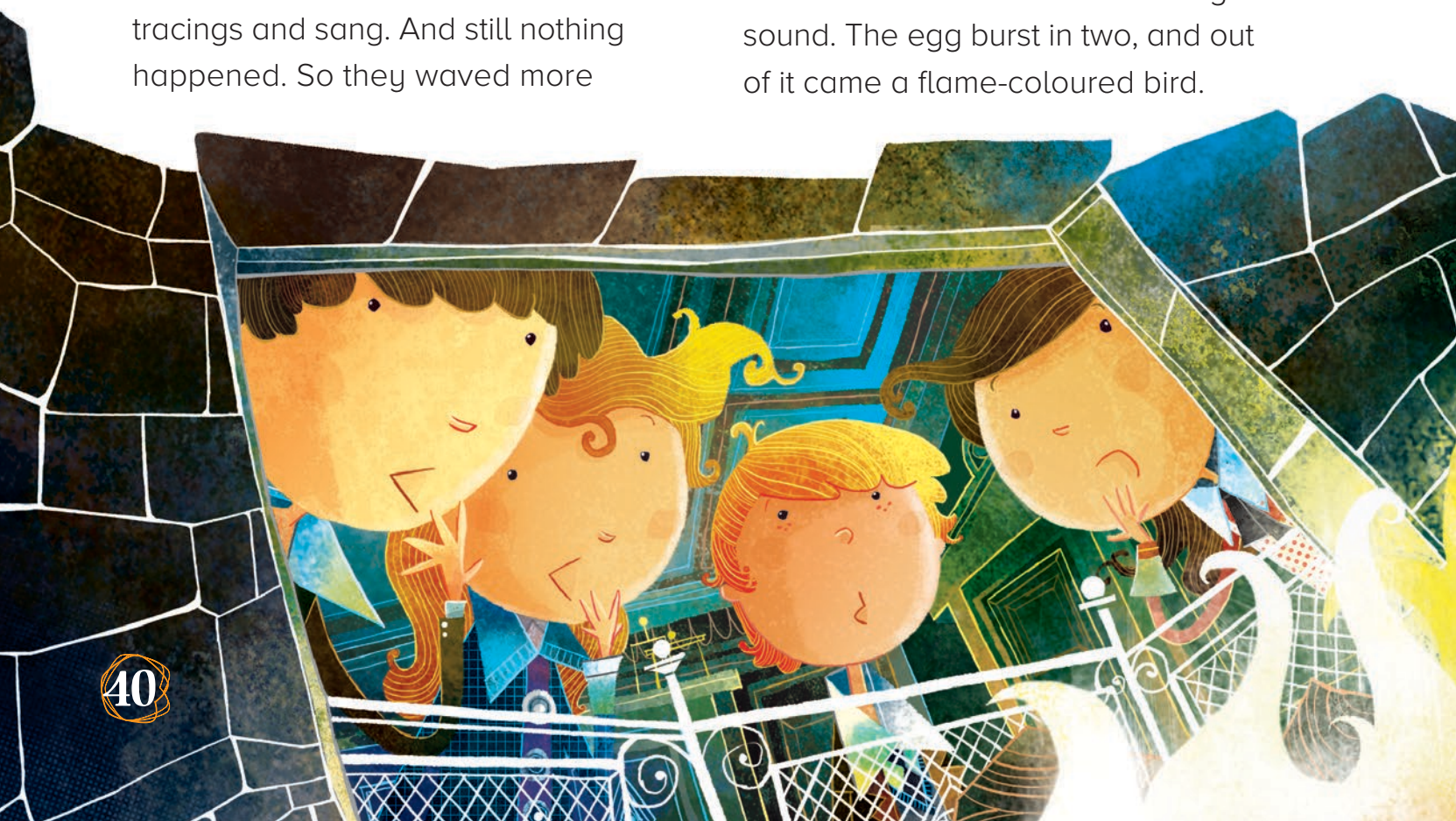
“Oh, crikey!” they said.

There lay the egg, glowing in a nest of hot ashes.

“It’s not smashed,” said Robert, and he put his hand under the grate and picked up the egg. But it was so hot, he dropped it. It bounced right into the glowing red-hot heart of the fire.

“Look at it!” cried Anthea. “Look! Look! Something IS going to happen!”

For the egg was now red-hot, and inside it something was moving. Next moment there was a soft cracking sound. The egg burst in two, and out of it came a flame-coloured bird.



It rested a moment among the flames, and the four children could see it growing bigger. Every mouth was a-gape, every eye a-goggle.

The bird rose in the fire, stretched its wings, and flew into the room. It flew round and round, and where it passed the air was warm. Then it perched on the fender. The children looked at each other. Then Cyril held out a hand towards the bird. It put its head on one side, looked up and said, “Be careful; I am not nearly cool yet.”

The children looked at the bird, and it was certainly worth looking at. Its feathers were like gold.

“Which of you,” the bird was saying, “put the egg into the fire?”

“He did,” said three voices, and three fingers pointed at Robert.

The bird bowed. “I am your grateful debtor,” it said with a high-bred air.

The children were all choking with wonder and curiosity – all except Robert. He said, “I know who you are. You are the Phoenix,” and the bird was quite pleased.

“My fame has lived then for two thousand years,” it said.

Cyril fetched the old encyclopaedia, and on page 246, he found:

“Phoenix – in ornithology, a fabulous bird of antiquity.”

“Antiquity is quite correct,” said the Phoenix, “but fabulous – do I look it?”

Everyone shook their heads. “The ancients speak of this bird as the only one of its kind.”

“That’s right enough,” said the Phoenix.



"Look out, I'm nearly cool now," and with a whirr of golden wings it fluttered to the table.

Cyril went on: "Its head crested with a beautiful plumage, its neck covered with feathers of gold, and the rest of its body purple; only the tail white, and the eyes sparkling like stars. They say that it lives about five hundred years in the wilderness, and builds itself a pile of sweet wood, fires it with the wafting of its wings, and burns itself; and from its ashes grows a Phoenix."

"That book is most inaccurate," said the Phoenix, ruffling its golden feathers. "My body was never purple, and as for my tail – well – I ask you, IS it white?"

"No, it's not," said everybody.

"And the Phoenix has an egg, like all respectable birds," said the Phoenix. "It makes a pile, lays its egg, and burns itself; and it goes to sleep and wakes up in its egg, comes out and goes on living again, and so on for ever and ever. I can't tell you how weary I got."

"But how did your egg get HERE?" asked Anthea.

"Ah, that's my secret," said the Phoenix. "I might tell YOU," it went on, looking at Robert with eyes that were indeed starry. "You put me on the fire..."

"It was an accident," said Robert, telling the truth with some difficulty.

"You won't vanish, will you?" asked Anthea anxiously.

"Why?" it asked, puffing out its golden feathers, "do you wish me to stay?"

"Oh, YES," said every one, with unmistakable sincerity.

"I will tell you my story," said the Phoenix. "I had resided, as your book says, for thousands of years in the wilderness, and I was becoming weary. But I acquired the habit of laying my egg and burning myself every five hundred years – you know how difficult it is to break a habit."

"Yes," said Cyril. "Jane used to bite her nails."



Imagine It!

If you could go anywhere in the universe, where would you ask the magic carpet to take you? Can you think of three places?

“It was getting near the time to lay that tedious egg,” said the bird, “when I met a prince and princess. They told me their life story. They were so fond of each other that they did not want anyone else, so an enchanter gave them a magic carpet (you’ve heard of a magic carpet?), and they told it to take them away from everyone – and it brought them to the wilderness. And as they had no further use for the carpet, they gave it to me!”

“I don’t see what you wanted with a carpet,” said Jane, “when you’ve got those lovely wings.”



“They ARE nice wings, aren’t they?” said the Phoenix. “Well, I laid my egg on the carpet, then I said, ‘Now, take that egg where it can’t be hatched for two thousand years, and where someone will light a fire, and put the egg in to hatch,’ and, you see, it’s all come out exactly as I said.”

“But the magic carpet that takes you anywhere you wish,” said Robert. “What became of that?”

“Oh, THAT?” said the Phoenix. ”I should say that that is the carpet. I remember the pattern perfectly.” It pointed to the floor.

At that instant, Father’s key was heard in the door.

“Oh,” whispered Cyril, “now we shall catch it for not being in bed!”

“Wish yourself there,” said the Phoenix, in a hurried whisper, “and then wish the carpet back in its place.”

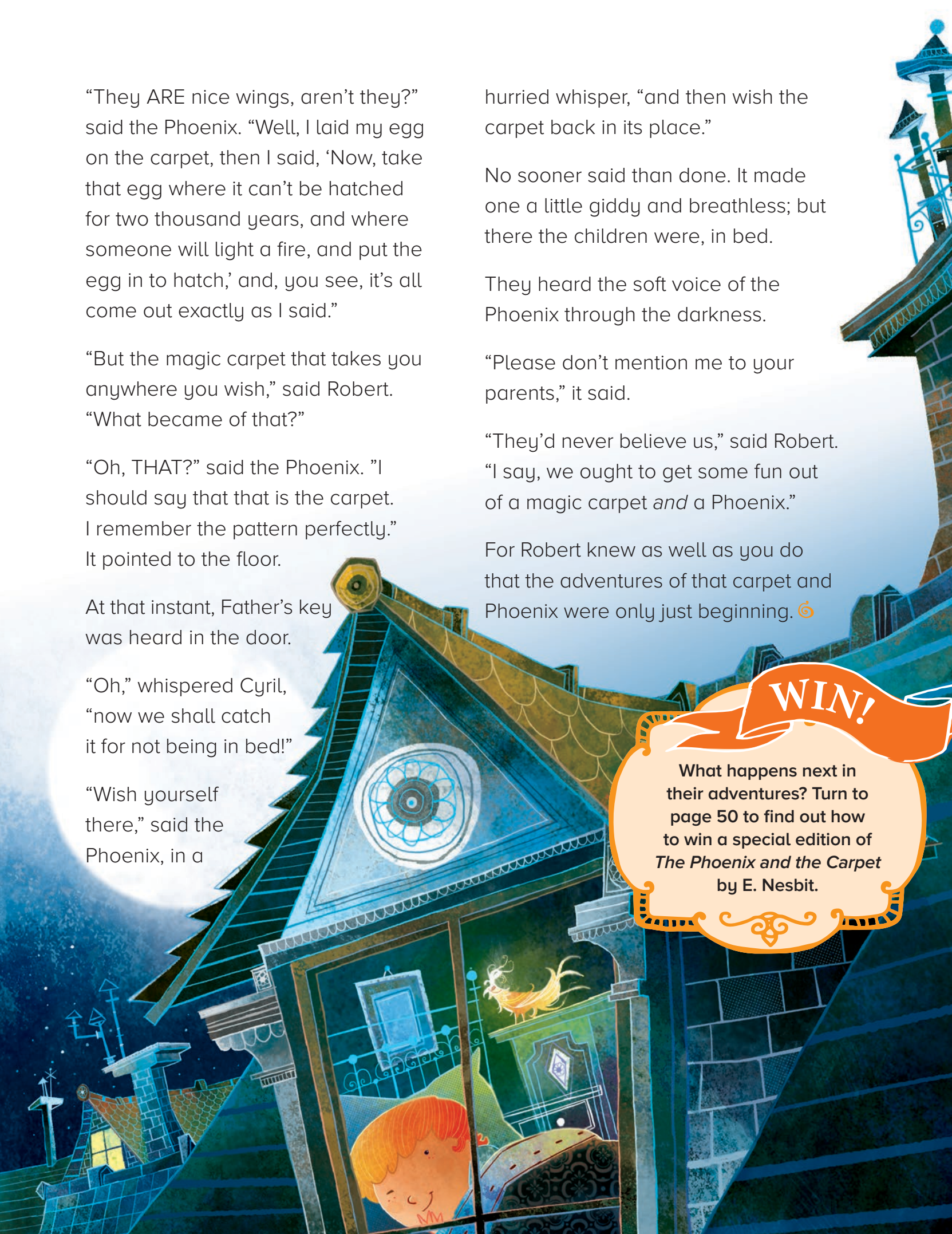
No sooner said than done. It made one a little giddy and breathless; but there the children were, in bed.

They heard the soft voice of the Phoenix through the darkness.

“Please don’t mention me to your parents,” it said.

“They’d never believe us,” said Robert. “I say, we ought to get some fun out of a magic carpet *and* a Phoenix.”

For Robert knew as well as you do that the adventures of that carpet and Phoenix were only just beginning.



WIN!

What happens next in their adventures? Turn to page 50 to find out how to win a special edition of *The Phoenix and the Carpet* by E. Nesbit.

storytime playbox

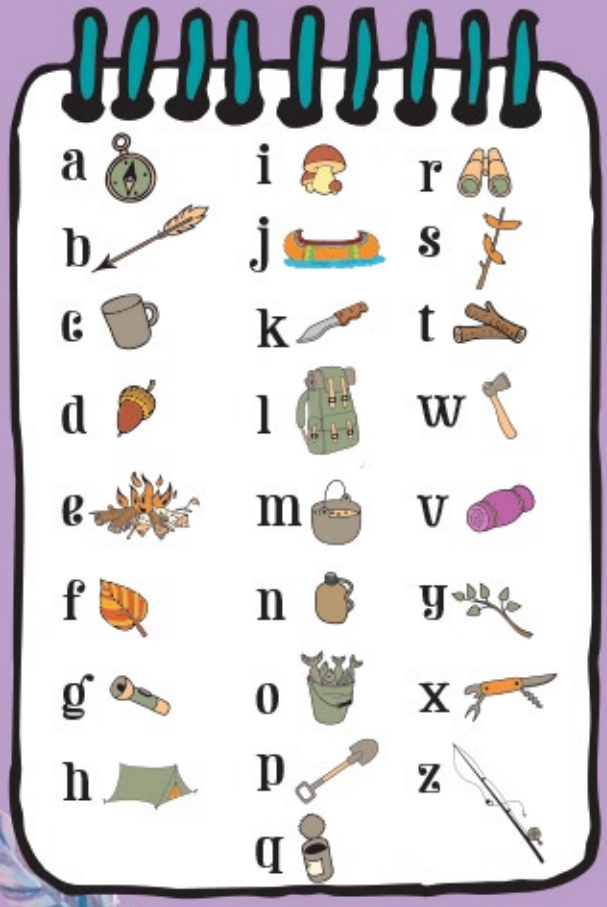
Send some hugs, make a tiny Thumbelina puppet, voyage with Sinbad and show us how story-smart you are!

1 PHOENIX Feathers!

The Phoenix has been flying all over our Playbox pages and has dropped feathers everywhere. How many can you count? Write your answer here.

2 Bear Brain

Can you crack this code to work out what the bear whispered to the traveller? Write your answer below.





3 CUPID I.O.U.

It isn't just Cupid who spreads love – now you can too! Fill out, colour in and decorate our special I.O.U. slips and give them to someone you love!

I.O.U.
one squeezy cuddle
from: to:

I.O.U.
a big hug
from: to:

I.O.U.
a kiss on the cheek
from: to:

4 Quick Quiz

In The Wish Fish, what is the second type of house the fisherman asks for from the flounder?

A Castle



B Cottage



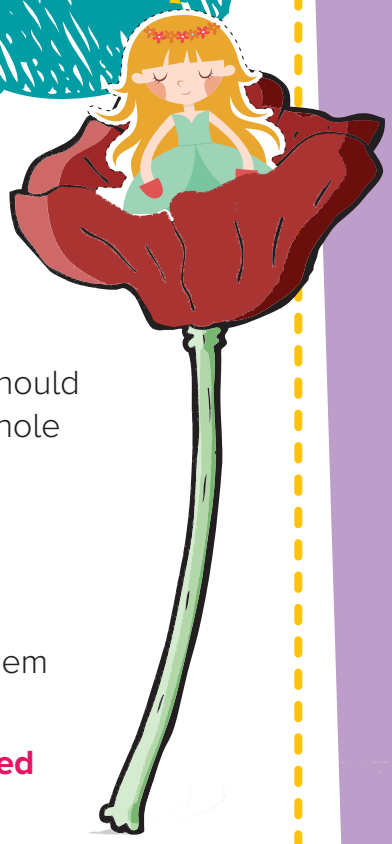
C Manor House



5 MAKE A THUMBELINA TULIP!

Ask a grown-up!

Print and cut out our cute little Thumbelina puppet to wear on your thumb and act out our fairy tale.



- Cut an empty egg carton into six separate cups.
- Use poster paint to paint the cups red, like the tulips in the Thumbelina story (or use any colour you like).
- When the paint is dry, carefully cut around the top edges to make them look more like tulip petals.
- Use a craft knife or scissors to cut a hole in the base of one tulip – it should be wide enough to pop your thumb through. Make a second, smaller hole to fit a pipe cleaner through.
- Make tiny pipe cleaner holes in the bases of the remaining tulips.
- Print out and cut out our Thumbelina thumb puppet from **storytimemagazine.com/free**. Stick it around your thumb or finger.
- Slot green pipe cleaner stalks into the base of each tulip and place them in a vase, like a bunch of flowers.
- **Slot your Thumbelina thumb puppet into the base of the wide-holed tulip so that you can act out the story.**

TIP! Use toy animals to help you act out the rest of the story.

6 Clowning Around!

Only two clown faces are the same. Circle them!



ANSWERS: 1. Phoenix Feathers – 12; 2. Bear Brain – The code says: 'Read more stories'; 4. Quick Quiz – C Manor House; 6. Clowning Around – B and G are identical.

SAIL THE SEVEN SEAS

How to Play

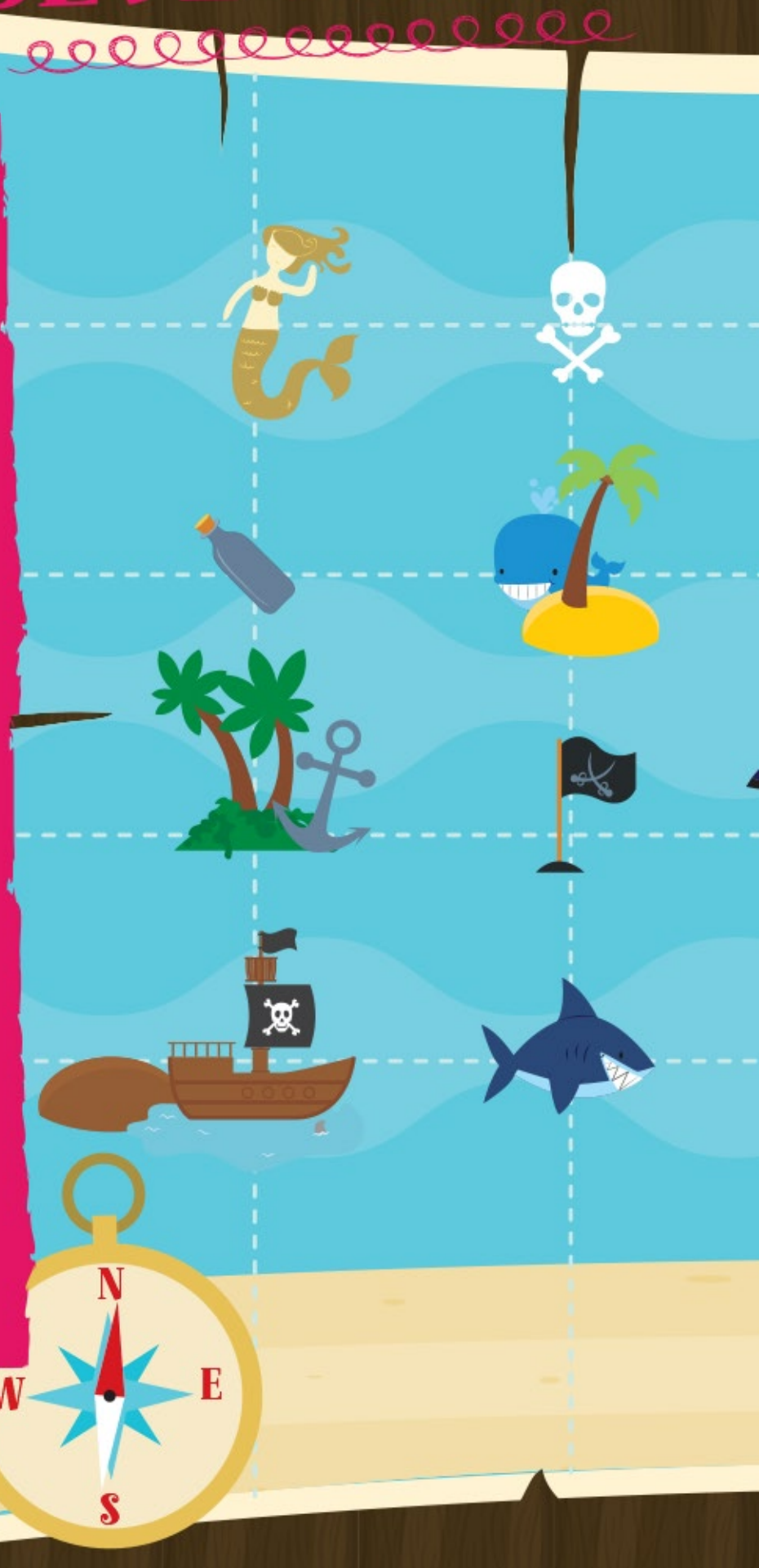
Begin your journey at the port (the bottom left square on the map), then simply follow the clues to find Sinbad's hidden treasure chest.

CLUES

Start from the port and set your course,
Make sure your ship is sailing north,
Until you reach Green Seaweed Isle,
Where it's safe to rest a while.
Pull up your anchor, head due east,
Soon, you'll see a horsey beast.
Make a quick turn, go north-west,
You're getting closer to the chest.

Don't be fooled by the golden isle,
It hides a whale, so run a mile!
Sail north-east to a sea of sharks,
Hurry now! It's getting dark.

Steer your ship towards the south,
Sail right past the dragon's mouth.
Dodge through rocks, sharp and tall,
Until you reach an island small.
Drop your anchor in the bay,
Your treasure's here.
Hip, hip, hooray!



Join Sinbad on an exciting voyage across the sea to find his treasure chest – but be sure to avoid Whale Island and the spooky sea-stallion!



STORY MAGIC

We nominate 2016 the year of stories – and here are some great ways to get you started as a super-powered story reader!

Cool Clubs

Begin this year with a resolution to start or join a children's book club – it's an effective way to help your little ones fall in love with reading!

TIP 1: The Reading Agency runs **Chatterbooks** – a UK-wide network of children's reading groups, held in libraries and schools. To get involved or find a group local to you, visit: readingagency.org.uk/children

TIP 2: Join Book Trust's online **Bookstart Bear Club** – it's free to join and you can record your reading journey, get brilliant book recommendations and play games! Visit: www.bookstart.org.uk/bookstart-bear-club/

TIP 3: Start a group in your own home! Keep it small, keep it short (30 minutes is fine for younger children) and choose a book that's fun and has engaging illustrations.

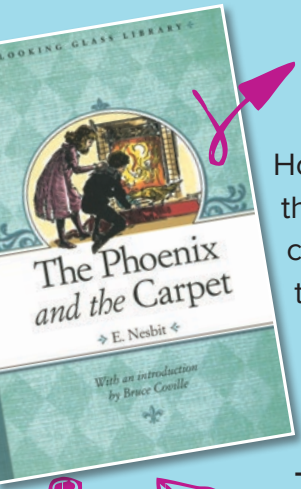
BOOK OF THE MONTH

A sweet picture book to start 2016, we highly recommend *Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev, illustrated by Taeeun Yoo. When a little boy and his tiny elephant find they don't fit in at Pet Club, they start their own club for unusual pets of all shapes and sizes – and make some new friends along the way. (Simon & Schuster)



COMPETITIONS FOR BOOK LOVERS

WIN



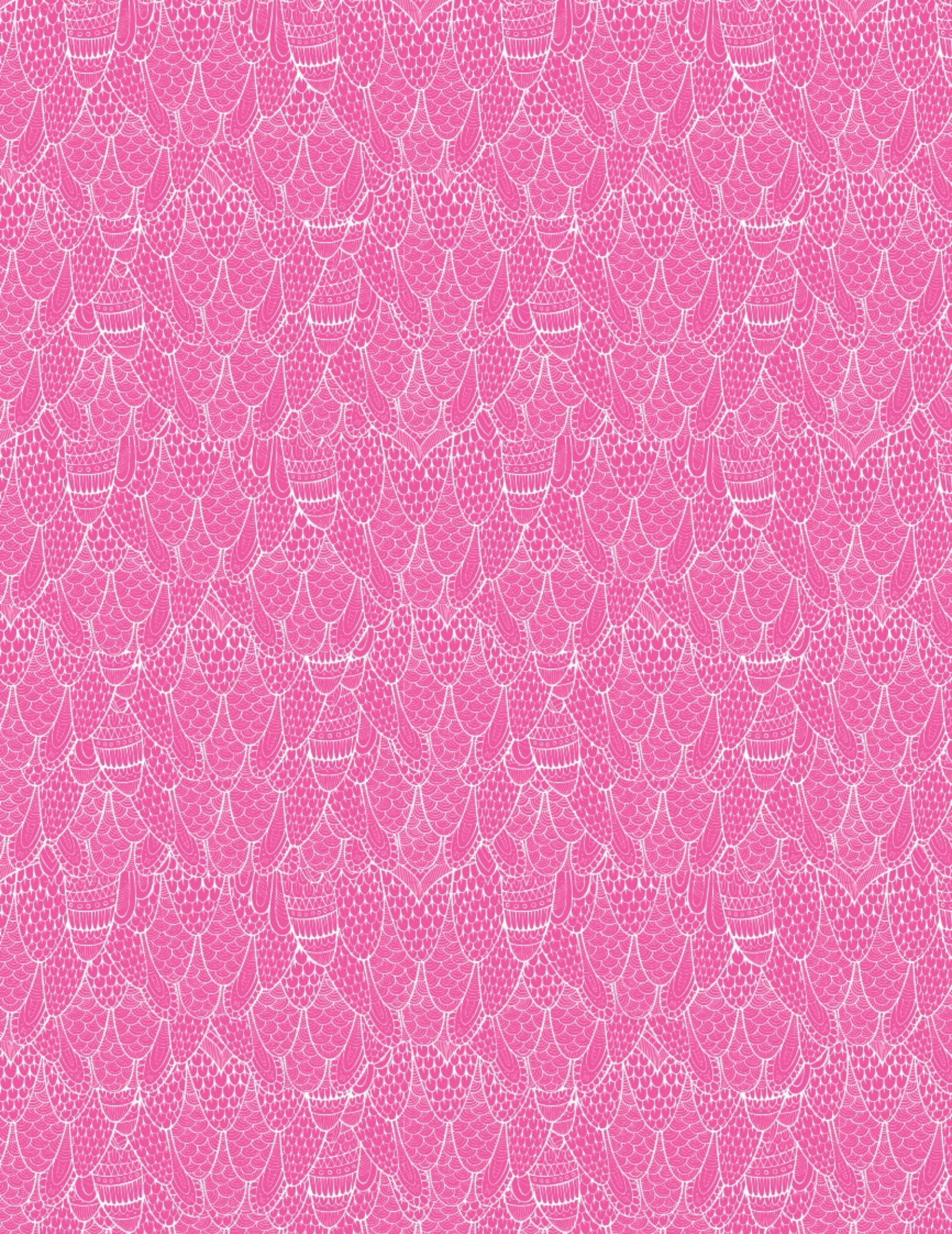
How many exciting places will the children visit on their magic carpet, and what will happen to the fantastic Phoenix? To find out, enter our competition to win a beautiful copy of ***The Phoenix and the Carpet*** by E. Nesbit!

Fans of our Around the World stories will love this double prize bundle from Lonely Planet Kids! ***The Travel Book*** features a different country on every page and is packed with facts; while sticker atlas, ***Adventures Around the Globe***, comes with over 250 reusable stickers!



To enter, **visit: storytimemagazine.com/win**

DID YOU KNOW? **The children in *The Phoenix and the Carpet* also star in *Five Children and It* by the same author, which featured in Storytime Issue 5. Missed it? Pick it up from our back-issue shop: storytimemagazine.com/shop**



Let's fall in love with stories!



Make a wish on a special fish!



Cupid's arrow of love misfires



Four children find a fabulous phoenix and a magic carpet!



WIN Brilliant Books!

Join the story fun at:
www.storytimemagazine.com

Coming in issue 18

